

## CLAIMS

- 1           1.     A messaging system for providing messaging to end-users, the system  
2 comprising:  
3               a data store module for storing messages sent among the end-users, wherein  
4               each message includes one or more submessages and wherein the data  
5               store stores the messages and submessages in a relational manner.
- 1           2.     The messaging system of claim 1, wherein the data store module  
2 comprises:  
3               a contents module adapted to store submessages of the messages sent among  
4               the end-users, wherein a message sent by a sender to a recipient  
5               includes one or more references to submessages in the contents  
6               module.
- 1           3.     The messaging system of claim 2, wherein the contents module stores a  
2 plurality of submessages and wherein certain ones of the submessages are created by  
3 different end-users at different times.
- 1           4.     The messaging system of claim 1, wherein the data store module stores  
2 only a single version of each message and/or submessage.
- 1           5.     The messaging system of claim 1, further comprising:  
2               an attributes module for storing attributes of the messages and/or submessages  
3               in the data store.
- 1           6.     The messaging system of claim 5, wherein the attributes module is adapted  
2 to store an attribute indicating a length of time that a message and/or submessage is  
3 retained.

1           7.     The messaging system of claim 5, wherein the attributes module is adapted  
2 to store an attribute indicating a length of time that a message and/or submessage is valid.

1           8.     The messaging system of claim 5, wherein the attributes module is adapted  
2 to store an attribute indicating security information for a message and/or submessage.

1           9.     The messaging system of claim 5, wherein the attributes module is adapted  
2 to store an attribute indicating whether a message and/or submessage can be viewed by a  
3 given end-user.

1           10.    The messaging system of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                a relationships module for holding data describing relationships among the  
3                messages and submessages.

1           11.    The messaging system of claim 10, wherein the relationships module is  
2 adapted to hold data describing submessages within a message.

1           12.    The messaging system of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                a client interface module for interfacing with client applications utilized by the  
3                end-users to access the messaging system.

1           13.    A computer program product comprising:  
2                a computer-readable medium having computer program logic embodied  
3                therein for providing messaging to end-users, the system comprising:  
4                a data store module for storing messages sent among the end-users,  
5                wherein each message includes one or more submessages and  
6                wherein the data store stores the messages and submessages in a  
7                relational manner.

1           14.    The computer program product of claim 13, wherein the data store module  
2 comprises:

3                   a contents module adapted to store submessages of the messages sent among  
4                   the end-users, wherein a message sent by a sender to a recipient  
5                   includes one or more references to submessages in the contents  
6                   module.

1           15.    The computer program product of claim 14, wherein the contents module  
2 stores a plurality of submessages and wherein certain ones of the submessages are created  
3 by different end-users at different times.

1           16.    The computer program product of claim 13, wherein the data store module  
2 stores only a single version of each message and/or submessage.

1           17.    The computer program product of claim 13, further comprising:  
2                   an attributes module for storing attributes of the messages and/or submessages  
3                   in the data store.

1           18.    The computer program product of claim 17, wherein the attributes module  
2 is adapted to store an attribute indicating a length of time that a message and/or  
3 submessage is retained.

1           19.    The computer program product of claim 17, wherein the attributes module  
2 is adapted to store an attribute indicating a length of time that a message and/or  
3 submessage is valid.

1           20.    The computer program product of claim 17, wherein the attributes module  
2 is adapted to store an attribute indicating security information for a message and/or  
3 submessage.

1           21.     The computer program product of claim 17, wherein the attributes module  
2 is adapted to store an attribute indicating whether a message and/or submessage can be  
3 viewed by a given end-user.

1           22.     The computer program product of claim 13, further comprising:  
2                 a relationships module for holding data describing relationships among the  
3                 messages and submessages.

1           23.     The computer program product of claim 22, wherein the relationships  
2 module is adapted to hold data describing submessages within a message.

1           24.     The computer program product of claim 13, further comprising:  
2                 a client interface module for interfacing with client applications utilized by the  
3                 end-users to access the messaging system.

1           25.     A computer-implemented method of providing messaging to end-users,  
2 comprising:  
3                 storing messages sent among the end-users in a data store of a messaging  
4                 system, wherein each message includes one or more submessages and  
5                 wherein the data store stores the messages and submessages in a  
6                 relational manner.

1           26.     The computer-implemented method of claim 25, further comprising:  
2                 defining an attributes module in the messaging system, the attributes module  
3                 for storing attributes of the messages and/or submessages in the data  
4                 store.

1           27.     The computer-implemented method of claim 26, wherein the attributes  
2 module is adapted to store an attribute indicating a length of time that a message and/or  
3 submessage is retained.

1           28.     The computer-implemented method of claim 26, wherein the attributes  
2     module is adapted to store an attribute indicating a length of time that a message and/or  
3     submessage is valid.

1           29.     The computer-implemented method of claim 26, wherein the attributes  
2     module is adapted to store an attribute indicating security information for a message  
3     and/or submessage.

1           30.     The computer-implemented method of claim 26, wherein the attributes  
2     module is adapted to store an attribute indicating whether a message and/or submessage  
3     can be viewed by a given end-user.

1           31.     The computer-implemented method of claim 25, further comprising:  
2                 defining a relationships module in the messaging system, the relationships  
3                 module for holding data describing relationships among the messages  
4                 and submessages.

1           32.     The computer-implemented method of claim 31, wherein the relationships  
2     module is adapted to hold data describing submessages within a message.